

Senators,

I would like to share my concerns with **SB 220 Physician Assisted Suicide**.

Never in the history of the world has there been a civilization that survives and is called great when the weak and vulnerable of a society are not protected.

A person who is gift, should be allowed to die of natural causes, which would include a patient refusing medications that will prolong life and to request medications that will ease pain.

However, if a person has the choice to ask a physician to administer a drug to commit suicide, puts our society in great danger, leading to many other decisions that we are unable to comprehend now.

In time, who else will be given the right to request a suicide drug when a patient is not in his/her right mind due to extreme physical or mental suffering that leaves him incapable of wanting to live in this one moment.

Behind closed doors could it really be the doctor who convinces a patient that it is the most compassionate thing he can do for himself and for his loved ones to kill himself sparing himself and family the pain...physically, emotionally, financially because he is a burden to society and to himself?

Think of people without sufficient support of family or friends who simply give up and often unnecessarily. I have a brother in Portland who came close to ending his life while in the hospital before family realized how badly he really was suffering. The doctors had written him off as a hopeless case and told him there was nothing they could do to help him. He was too emotionally and physically imbalanced to make this decision because of his intense suffering. With the help of an advocate and extended family, he is a healthy 56 year old man today and a productive citizen, brother and friend who blesses many with his life.

As consciences are dulled, who will ever really know how a decision is made even if the requirement is to have more than one person present? There tend to many loop holes that can be manipulated in laws such as this.

As time passes this "**compassionate**" choice of physician assisted suicide may very well translate into a society deeming themselves qualified to choose whether any person with physical disabilities and are a burden to society and may be "**suffering**" or causing others to be inconvenienced and suffer... unworthy of life. This may be your child or grandchild. Or it may indeed be you or me.

How can a society benefit by killing the people we are called to love during their time of suffering? I have often heard that to allow a person to choose "physician assisted suicide" is the compassionate thing to do. **The meaning of the word compassion is: to suffer with.** The **compassionate** choice at the time of a person's suffering would not be to help them commit suicide but rather to model virtuous perseverance in caring for and easing their suffering with closeness and care. This time together offers the possibility of growth in the spirit which also is proven to heal bodies for both patient and caregivers and exhibits authentic compassion.

Modern medicine has so many ways to ease suffering without assisted suicide.

February 21, 2012 our 31 year old daughter died with Leukemia and all its complications. She suffered dearly and we suffered with her. Theresa would have qualified on 100s of different occasions to ask her oncologist to help her commit suicide. However, her husband, children, siblings and we as her parents had the privilege of growing closer as we walked this journey of life together, which death is a natural part of. We all shared in her suffering and learned many things about the value and beauty of life in all its stages whether she was bald and skinny, vomiting and weak as she waited for her specialized HLA

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SB 220

Modern medicine has so many ways to ease suffering without assisted suicide. February 21, 2013 our 21 year old daughter died with leukemia and all its complications. She suffered deeply and we suffered with her. There was no one to turn to for help on 100s of different occasions to ask her oncologist to help her commit suicide. However, her husband, children, siblings and we as her parents had the privilege of growing closer as we walked this journey of life together, which death is a natural part of. We all shared in her suffering and learned many things about the value and beauty of life in all its stages whether she was bald and skinny, vomiting and weak as she waited for her specialized HIV

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Senator,

platelets that sometimes didn't work and so many other complications. If she had asked her doctor to help her commit suicide before she died of natural causes..... I would not have had the privilege to receive her hug one morning 2 weeks before she passed on, after she had had a terrible bout with nausea, looking deep in my eyes she said, "Mom, you promise me something..... you promise me???" "Yes, Theresa.... I promise you...what is it?" "Please promise me that you will not be sad if I die, you have to be happy.....promise me..... because I will be happy in Heaven with God". Then she smiled and held me and all I could do is remember when I had held her so tenderly as a small child in so much the same tender way.

After 2 days of being almost completely unconscious and 1 1/2 days before Theresa died, her hubby brought their 2 year old twins daughters to the hospital for a visit.

Somehow, Theresa rallied and brightened when her girls entered the room...she threw her covers over her bald head making a tent for her precious twins, Anya and Colette, to crawl under and all we could see were their little toes kicking and pushing to be close to their mommy..... they squealed and giggled as their mommy made animal sounds...talking with them as only a mother can....playing animals in the forest and we could also hear her sighs as they pushed on her weak and broken body. Her hubby captured these moments on video and they will be treasured in her girl's minds and hearts forever since they will never have the blessing of feeling the arms of their mother around them again as most of us have. These 2 examples are only a few of the stories that filled Theresa's last days.

If she would have been convinced by her physician or allowed to choose on her own in a weak emotional and painful moment, "physician assisted suicide" as the most compassionate thing to do for herself and for her family, her daughters would not have this tender memory...nor would we have many others.

No one knows what marvelous things are awaiting us in those days and hours before our death. There is no way to predict the outcome of a sickness? Nor can we predict the healing of relationships that often happens very near to the death of a loved one that would not happen if we allow them to snuff their life away. I know a grown man who has shared his story of arriving at the hospital close to the time of his estranged father's death and before the son left the hospital room the father, who could only whisper, called for his son to come close to him. The father embraced the son and holding on to him as he had never done before told his son that he loved him for the first time. The son's wounded heart was healed after so many years of rejection and he lived a peace filled life that overflowed to others. The father died a few hours later. We don't know what healing moments are left for our final moments of life. It is not healthy for us to presume and yet we are pursuing this bill in the name of health rights. What is our medical world that is meant to heal body and spirit coming to when in the name of health we allow our weak and vulnerable to choose suicide?

Most everyone holds Mother Teresa of Calcutta as an icon of caring for the sick and dying. She would never have blessed such a law. She would have lifted the sick person in her arms and given them the tender love of Christ either taking them to the nearest hospital for medical care, love and dignity or to her home for the dying where many of the sick who were easily candidates for assisted suicide were quick to tell Mother Teresa and her sisters that they were now dying like an angel though they had lived so miserably in the gutters of Calcutta. And they died natural deaths suffering along the way with the compassionate love of the sisters caring for their basic needs and they died in peace.

I would ask you to deeply consider voting against SB 220 and adopt an authentic respect for human life until natural death.

Respectfully, Roxie Nistler
7415 Clausen Rd., Helena, MT 59601

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7412 Clausen Rd., Helena, MT 59601

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